

Central Intelligence Agency
National Foreign Assessment Center
Office of Imagery Analysis

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MEMORANDUM FOR: HIO, USSR-Eastern Europe

SUBJECT : Evaluation of Soviet Presence at Santiago de las Vegas, Cuba--1962 to 1979 (U)

A review of manned aircraft and satellite photography of Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 and Lourdes Military Headquarters shows that in all likelihood elements of the same Soviet ground forces combat unit have been located there since at least November 1962 and August 1964 respectively. The association of the elements at these two facilities is based on a series of parallel events noted since 1964. (S)

Elements of the Soviet unit at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2, in November 1962, appeared to be equipped with tanks, assault guns, FROG tactical missiles, anti-aircraft weapons and other unidentified support equipment. Based on our present knowledge of Soviet ground force unit structure, this equipment probably comprised a tank battalion, at least one FROG battalion, and an air-defense battery. Analysis of photography between 1962 and 1979 shows a steady expansion of administrative and support facilities. Coincident with these changes were the receipt of new equipment and modification to the organizational structure of some elements.

The elements of the unit at Lourdes in 1964 appeared to be equipped with BTR-60 armored personnel carriers (APCs), tank/assault guns, 120-mm mortars with prime movers, and support equipment. Changes to facilities, equipment and unit organization similar to those seen at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 were also noted at Lourdes between 1964 and 1979. [Redacted]

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Santiago de las Vegas

In 1962, the elements of the Soviet unit at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 were garrisoned in tents, and the equipment was parked in among the trees. There were very few permanent facilities present. Between 1964 and 1970 most of the barracks and approximately 75 percent of the total vehicle storage capacity were constructed. Between 1972 and 1979, a few additional barracks, and the remaining vehicle storage buildings were completed. [Redacted]

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The structure of some of the elements of the unit have been changed and equipment has been upgraded over the years. The FROG tactical missiles present from 1962 through 1971 were probably replaced by at least one battery of BM 14-17 multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) in 1971. The BM 14-17s were apparently replaced, probably during 1978, by a battalion of more modern BM-21 MRLs. The towed antiaircraft artillery (AAA) pieces have been replaced by ZSU-23/4 self-propelled antiaircraft artillery (SPAA) guns. The APCs in the motorized rifle battalions which are part of the brigade today were upgraded from the older BTR-60 to BTR-60PBs in 1978-1979. And finally, the older antitank guided missiles (ATGMs) have been replaced by the more modern BRDM-2 SAGGER. [redacted]

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Major training facilities were already present by the mid-1960s. They included, two types of Soviet obstacle courses, small arms and tank subcaliber ranges, an artillery terrain model, wheeled and tracked driver training areas, and personnel exercise areas. These facilities remain basically unchanged up until the present time. [redacted]

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Lourdes

The initial introduction of combat equipment to the vehicle storage area at Lourdes occurred by August 1964. This equipment consisted of BTR-60 APCs, tank/assault guns, 120-mm mortar with prime movers, AAA pieces and 50 to 75 other wheeled support vehicles. Infantry training facilities consisting of trenches, foxholes, and AAA revetments, and a Soviet-style obstacle course, were constructed by the fall of 1966. Several small support buildings were also present near the storage area. [redacted]

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Changes observed in the support facilities during the 1960s and early 1970s included the razing of the small buildings, construction of vehicle sheds, abandonment of the obstacle course constructed in 1966 and the construction of a new obstacle course within the Lourdes Sigint Complex proper in 1968. [redacted]

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Additional and more modern equipment was observed in the Lourdes vehicle storage area after 1977. BTR-60PB APCs replaced the older BTR-60 APCs, ZSU-23/4 SPAA guns replaced older towed AAA pieces and TMM scissor bridges, D-30 122-mm howitzers, and possibly BRDM-2 ATGMs were newly identified. The TMM scissor bridges may be replacements for the KMM treadway bridges that were last observed at Santiago de las Vegas in 1971. [redacted]

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Chronology

A detailed chronology of the activity observed at Santiago de las Vegas and Lourdes during the period of this review follows:

1962. We have substantiated a 1963 photo interpretation report of a Soviet presence at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2. (NPIC. Soviet Military Personnel in Cuba, NPIC/R-1129/63, March 1963, SECRET.). Indicators of the Soviet presence are: Frog support equipment, camouflage netting, Soviet-type tents, and a section of a Soviet-style obstacle course. Few buildings are present, and most of the vehicles and tents are well hidden under trees (see 11 December 1962 illustration). [redacted]

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1963. We observed no apparent change at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 during 1963. The tents and equipment were located in their previously identified areas. At Lourdes, Soviet-style tents were observed within the Sigint facility and adjacent to the vehicle storage area. No combat equipment was observed in the facility (see 8 June 1963 illustration). [redacted]

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1964. At Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 during 1964, the number of buildings increased with the completion of a barracks area on the southwestern edge of the installation. In addition, the road network was being improved and some thinning of the trees in preparation for permanent facility construction had begun. The recreational facilities were also being improved. Tents were still observed throughout the trees and over 100 vehicles were observed (see 2 April 1964 illustration). At Lourdes, combat equipment was present by August. [redacted]

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1965. During 1965, the tree-clearing at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 continued. Some of the Frog equipment was moved out of the installation. Very little other change was seen. At Lourdes additional combat and combat support equipment were present and a unit structure was becoming apparent. It appears that this structure is a combined arms battalion with subordinate units consisting of one or two BTR-60 companies, a tank/assault gun platoon, a mortar battery, an air defense battery, and a headquarters/services element (see 27 January 1965 illustration). [redacted]

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1965. Tree-clearing operations at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 during 1966 are extensive. Four unit areas can now be identified-- tank, Frog, combined arms, and service support. KMM treadway bridges and BTR-60 APCs were seen for the first time. A tank subcaliber range was also present (see 14 July 1966 illustration). At Lourdes, a Soviet-style obstacle course had been constructed near the equipment storage area.

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1967. At Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 vehicle storage sheds were started between July and September. The revetted ammo storage area was started and completed during the year, however, it was not occupied (see 25 October 1967 illustration). At Lourdes, vehicle storage sheds were in the initial stages of construction and a second AAA battery has been confirmed.

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1968. During 1968 the barracks and training areas at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 were expanded. By January, new Type A and B Soviet-style obstacle course and a small arms range were completed (see 19 January 1968 illustration). In July a small tent camp was present and construction of some barracks had begun (see 23 July 1968 illustration). By November, the barracks area was complete and the tents were gone. The AAA sites had moved to a new location within the barracks, and the ammo trucks were moved into the re- vetted parking (see 18 November 1968 illustration). At Lourdes, a new Type A Soviet-style obstacle course was constructed within the Sigint complex and the old obstacle course was abandoned.

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1969-1971. Very little construction activity took place during this time frame. At Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 a barracks area on the southwestern edge of the installation was expanded in 1970 (see 12 November 1970 illustration). Two vehicle sheds, in the area which now houses elements of a motorized rifle battalion, were constructed in 1971. At Lourdes, no apparent change was seen.

1972. In 1972, an increase in combat support equipment was seen at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2. (This equipment was seen in a parade within the installation in December.). A battery of BM 14-17 MRLs was observed, and ATGMs were identified for the first time since they were reported here in 1962. The equipment seen in the parade appears to have a basic unit structure similar to that

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which was observed during the 1960s, and to the structure which is present in 1979. The KMM treadway bridges and the FROG equipment were not observed (see 29 December 1972 illustration). At Lourdes, no apparent change was noted. [redacted]

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1973-1976. During 1973 through 1976 there is very little change to the facilities at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2. Between February 1975 and March 1976, an obstacle course was moved to make room for a new parade field, and some of the gymnastics/exercise areas were refurbished. In addition, no major changes were observed within the equipment storage area at Lourdes, although a major expansion of the Sigint complex occurred. [redacted]

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1977-1979. During 1977, the vehicle storage capacity at Santiago de las Vegas Camp 2 expanded by about 25 percent (see 29 July 1977 and 29 January 1978 illustrations). New equipment observed here includes, BTR-60PB APCs, BM-21 MRLs, SAGGER ATGMs, and ZSU-23/4 SPAA guns. Also at Lourdes, new equipment was observed which included BTR-60PB APCs, D-30 122-mm howitzers, and TMM scissor bridges. [redacted]

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This report has been jointly prepared by analysts of OIA and NPIC. It is based on an extensive sampling of the available photography. (U)

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[redacted]
Chief, Land Forces Division
Office of Imagery Analysis

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11 Sep 79

WA112006 FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE MEDIA ANALYSIS AG/WA

PRAVDA EDITORIAL COMMENT ON SOVIET TROOPS IN CUBA

A MEASURED BUT UNYIELDING PRAVDA EDITORIAL ARTICLE, RELEASED BY TASS VERY SHORTLY AFTER SOVIET AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN'S 10 SEPTEMBER MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE, HAS PROVIDED MOSCOW'S FIRST AUTHORITATIVE RESPONSE TO RECENT STATEMENTS BY U.S. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS AND CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ON THE ISSUE OF A SOVIET COMBAT BRIGADE IN CUBA. THE EDITORIAL ARTICLE--STRIKINGLY PARALLELING AN AUTHORIZED TASS STATEMENT IN OCTOBER 1970 WHICH REJECTED U.S. CHARGES THAT THE USSR WAS BUILDING A SUBMARINE BASE IN CUBA--MAINTAINED THAT THE MISSION OF

SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL IN CUBA IS SOLELY ONE OF "HELPING STRENGTHEN THAT COUNTRY'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY." COMPLAINING THAT U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE NOT HELPED CALM THE SITUATION BUT ON THE CONTRARY HAVE MADE MATTERS WORSE, PRAVDA IN EFFECT URGED WASHINGTON TO HANDLE THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE ISSUE BUT DID NOT OFFER ANY HINTS OF SOVIET APPROACHES TOWARD A POSSIBLE RESOLUTION. LIKE EARLIER SOVIET AND CUBAN COMMENTARY, PRAVDA SUGGESTED THAT THE PRIMARY MOTIVE OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS A DESIRE TO EMBARRASS CUBA AS HOST OF THE NONALIGNED SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN HAVANA. ONLY SECONDARILY DID THE PAPER BRING UP THE MATTER OF SENATE SALT RATIFICATION PROCEEDINGS--WHICH MOSCOW PREVIOUSLY HAD PLAYED IN LOW KEY--BY PROFESSING TO SEE EFFORTS BY SALTOPPONENTS TO USE THE ISSUE TO PREVENT, OR AT LEAST COMPLICATE, THE RATIFICATION PROCESS.

THE 11 SEPTEMBER PRAVDA EDITORIAL ARTICLE, WHICH CAME A WEEK AFTER MOSCOW FIRST ACKNOWLEDGED THE RENEWED U.S. DEBATE ON THE ISSUE, WAS REMARKABLY SIMILAR IN FORMAT TO THE 1970 TASS STATEMENT, WITH ONE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION IN THE TREATMENT OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION. BOTH PRAVDA NOW AND TASS IN 1970 COMPLAINED OF A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IN AMERICAN MEDIA ECHOED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. BUT WHILE TASS AT THAT TIME ADDRESSED THE SUBSTANCE OF STATEMENTS BY OFFICIAL PENTAGON AND WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMEN WHICH, IT SAID, OPENED THE CAMPAIGN, PRAVDA MAINTAINED THE DISCRETION MOSCOW HAS DISPLAYED THUS FAR IN ITS TREATMENT OF STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE. IT WOULD SEEM, PRAVDA SAID, THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, "WHICH OF COURSE KNOWS THE WELL," SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THE NECESSARY EXPLANATIONS; "REGRETTABLY," HOWEVER, "OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAVE FOLLOWED A DIFFERENT COURSE." WITHOUT EXPLAINING WHAT THE UNIDENTIFIED OFFICIALS SAID, PRAVDA ADDED THAT THEIR STATEMENTS "ACTUALLY, SO TO SPEAK, ONLY ADD FUEL TO THE FIRE."

THIS CIRCUMSPECTION SUGGESTS A DESIRE TO AVOID FURTHER EXACERBATION OF SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS OVER THE CURRENT ISSUE; A DESIRE THAT MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN REFLECTED IN THE CHOICE OF AN EDITORIAL ARTICLE RATHER THAN AN AUTHORIZED TASS STATEMENT FOR WHAT OTHERWISE CLOSELY FOLLOWED THE 1970 FORMAT. BY SWITCHING TO A PRAVDA EDITORIAL ARTICLE MOSCOW CHOSE THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE FORM OF MEDIA COMMENTARY BUT ONE THAT IS NOT FORMALLY AN OFFICIAL EXPRESSION OF VIEWS. USING THIS VEHICLE, MOSCOW HAS CONVEYED A FIRM INSISTENCE THAT THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET TROOPS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET-CUBAN COOPERATION IS AN INALIENABLE RIGHT OF TWO SOVEREIGN STATES AND THAT ANY ATTEMPTS TO RESTRICT THIS RIGHT CONTRADICTS ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL NORMS. (SIMILARLY, TASS IN 1970 HAD MAINTAINED THAT SOVIET PORT CALLS IN CUBA WERE AN INALIENABLE RIGHT OF SOVEREIGN STATES, UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED AND CONFIRMED BY INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.)

FOR 17 YEARS, PRAVDA SAID, SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN TRAINING CUBAN SERVICEMEN AT A CENTER IN CUBA, AND THE NUMBER AND FUNCTION OF THE SOVIET PERSONNEL HAS NOT CHANGED. REJECTING AS GROUNDLESS "ALL CONTENTIONS ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF 'ORGANIZED SOVIET COMBAT UNITS'" IN CUBA, PRAVDA INSISTED THAT SOVIET PERSONNEL IN CUBA "DO NOT AND CANNOT PRESENT ANY THREAT" TO THE UNITED STATES, WHETHER BY SIZE OR BY FUNCTIONS.

RAISING THE QUESTION--AS TASS HAD ALSO DONE--OF THE REASON FOR THE CAMPAIGN, PRAVDA CLAIMED THAT THE "OUTCRY" WAS TIMED PRIMARILY TO COINCIDE WITH THE NONALIGNED SUMMIT CONFERENCE AND "NOT BY CHANCE" IS BEING USED TO COMPLICATE THE SALT RATIFICATION PROCESS. PRAVDA CAUTIONED IN CONCLUSION THAT "THOSE WHO CONNIVE AT" AND INSPIRE THE "HOSTILE" CAMPAIGN "SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY THEY ARE ASSUMING." (TASS HAD WARNED IN 1970 THAT "THOSE WHO DELIBERATELY OR IRRESPONSIBLY" SPREAD SUCH "FALSIFICATIONS PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE FOES OF PEACE.")

11 SEP 2029Z DGL/VM

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C O R R E C T I O N 64--(FBIS MEDIA ANALYSIS)

PARAGRAPH TWO, LINES ELEVEN AND TWELVE MAKE READ /// OF COURSE KNOWS THE FACTS WELL," SHOULD /// (SUPPLYING DROPPED WORD "FACTS");

PARAGRAPH THREE, LINE ONE MAKE READ /// SUGGESTS A DESIRE TO AVOID FURTHER EXACERBATION /// (CORRECTING-TYPO)

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